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A Human H5N1 Case Reported in Hong Kong

Report Categories:

Agriculture in the News

Poultry and Products

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Report Highlights:

The Hong Kong government (HKG) confirmed a human Influenza A (H5N1) infection on November 17, 2010. The Secretary for Food and Health indicated that according to the existing analysis, there is no sign of human-to-human transmission. While rejecting to confirm it is an imported case, the Secretary said the chance that the patient got the disease in China is high because of her recent travel record to China. Upon the confirmation of the case, the HKG has activated the Serious Response Level under the Government's Preparedness Plan for Influenza Pandemic, meaning the surveillance program is strengthened at both health care system and poultry farms. Also, the HKG has increased H5 testing samples for live poultry imports. However, there is no additional inspection program applied on chilled/ frozen poultry imports from other countries as a result of the confirmed human H5N1 case.

The Human H5N1 Case

A 59-year-old woman, who was confirmed to have infected with H5N1, is now in critical condition in hospital. She developed running nose since November 2 and fever and cough on November 5 after a trip to the mainland China from October 23 to November 1. She was then admitted to hospital on November 12. Government sources said the woman neither contacted any live poultry nor visited any farms during her stay in China.

The HKG has been trying to trace people who had been in close contact with the H5N1 patient and have them tested for H5. Laboratory results revealed that all eight close contacts of the H5N1 patient were negative for Influenza A (subtype H5).

Government Action

The HKG has raised the avian influenza alert level to “serious” and has taken a series of actions according to the contingency plan for the Serious Response Level.

At the farm level, the Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department will complete an inspection of all 30 chicken farms within two days ensuring that all biosecurity measures are up to licensing conditions and there is no abnormal mortality rate in farms. The department will also step up the inspection of the poultry wholesale market and surveillance of wild birds. Swab samples will be collected at various locations for H5 testing.

The HKG is also in close liaison with the Guangdong Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau, which indicated there are no reports of abnormality in the farms that supply chickens to Hong Kong. Both parties agreed to increase the amount of PCR testing (polymerase chain reaction) to cover about 25 percent of all the chickens that are supplied to Hong Kong.

In the area of environmental hygiene, the HKG has also strengthened inspection at public market stalls and fresh provisions shops, ensuring that chicken sellers comply with the licensing regulations, particularly the regulation prohibiting overnight stocking of live poultry at the retail level. (In 2008, the HKG amended the Food Business Regulation by prohibiting the overnight stocking of live poultry at retail outlets. It is believed to be an effective measure to break the virus cycle and reduce the virus left in the environment).

Within the health care system, the HKG has stepped up surveillance by testing all severe pneumonia cases for H5. Also, more stringent infection control measures will be enforced in public hospitals to minimize the risk of spreading avian influenza.

Background

Virus Trail

May 1997	18 people were infected with H5N1, of whom 6 died.
December 1997	About 1.4 million poultry were culled to stop spread of H5N1 virus. Poultry industry got \$11.6 million compensation.
May 2001	H5N1 broke out in wet markets. About 1.4 million poultry were culled and \$11.3 million were paid out to the industry.
February to April 2002	Chicken farms were infected. About 950,000 poultry were slaughtered and \$3 million were paid out to the industry.
December 2002	Five wet markets and two farms were infected leading to the slaughtering of 27,000 chickens.
February 2003	A man died after family trip to China, while son was recovered.
Feb 2006	An abandoned chicken found dead in the suburban area had been infected with H5 virus leading to the HKG's immediate banning of backyard poultry.
June 2008	Three wet markets were found with H5N1 virus, leading to the culling of 5000 chickens there.
December 2008	200 chickens died of H5N1 in a farm leading to the culling of 90,000 chickens in farms located within a 3 KM radius of the infected farm.

The HKG imposes temporary ban on the import of live poultry and poultry products from the following countries/places because of avian influenza cases there.

Afghanistan	Albania	Azerbaijan
Cambodia	Cameroon	Cote D'Ivoire
Croatia	Denmark Naestved	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Egypt	India	Indonesia
Iraq	Israel	Jordan
Kazakhstan	Laos	Myanmar
Netherlands	Niger	Nigeria

Noord-brabant Provision		
Pakistan	China Fujian Province Hunan Province Jiangsu Province Tibet Autonomous Region Xinjiang Autonomous Region	Portugal Oeste Ribatejo Norte
Romania	Russian Federation	Sudan
Sweden	The Republic of Korea Cholla-Namdo Province Cholla-Bukdo Province	Ukraine
Vietnam	Zimbabwe	

